PACIFIC FOREST TRUST

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Assembly Committee on Natural Resources- Oversight Hearing: Implementation of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32): Scoping Plan Update

March 10, 2014

I would like to thank the Committee and the Chair for this opportunity to offer testimony regarding the draft update to the Scoping Plan for implementation of the Global Warming Solutions Act.

I'd also like to thank Mary Nichols and her team at ARB for the continued good work and technical savvy that they so consistently demonstrate.

The Pacific Forest Trust welcomes this version of the draft update to the Scoping Plan. We appreciate that the ARB has had a tremendous amount of input since last fall, and made many significant improvements to the initial draft, especially in the forest and other natural resources arena. It is an excellent base for you to consider, and to make a few crucial improvements to.

Four specific recommended actions will markedly leverage this draft from a very good base to one that truly seizes the opportunities in front of us and realizes the opportunity to move carbon reductions in our natural systems to the level they can and must be. Doing this will ensure that California does for carbon reductions in the forest and biological systems what it has done for fossil fuel based emissions reductions, setting the global standard and path forward.

There are two main sources of CO2 emissions: fossil fuels and forest loss/degradation. The latter accounts for an estimated 40% of all excess CO2 in the atmosphere. California contributed its share—and more, perhaps--with the loss of billions of tons of CO2 from the harvest of these most carbon rich forests in the world, and the subsequent loss of some 40% of that forest cover. While the state has made enormous strides in CO2 reductions in the fossil fuels sector, promoting efficiencies and alternate sources of energy and fuels, it has barely scratched the surface with biocarbon. And yet the state has some of the most powerful biological emissions reductions tools of any worldwide.

Those mandates and investment in the fossil sector are paying off. But the marginal cost for decarbonizing our fossil fuel economy go up as the major reductions in this arena go down. Squeezing the last 33% CO2 emissions reductions in the transportation and energy sectors is projected to cost more than the first 67%.

The opposite is projected for actions in the biocarbon sector, especially in forests and in greening urban infrastructure: emissions reductions increase over time from initial investments, and the costs go down. Both arenas also have multiple other benefits: in

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adaptation, in securing and indeed increasing water supplies and in improving the overall quality of life in the state.

These four recommendations are:

1) Work with Biocarbon Systems, not Silos: Request one integrated Biocarbon Climate Plan for the state, rather than two separate plans as currently recommended. While the Plan notes that there should be actions in a variety of natural and working lands, from forests to agricultural and range lands to urban areas, it treats them all separately. These are linked systems, intertwined across the landscape. Wet meadows are within forests; most of our agricultural lands are woven in and out of forest; riparian forests link city centers to wild lands. Treating these in an integrated fashion will have myriad synergies: in adaptation, urban energy consumption reduction; and increase net resilience.

Implementation of this Plan can be phased, recognizing that some areas are ripe for investment now, but it will be a far more cost and outcome effective investment getting it right from the start.

2) Trust but Verify: set explicit integration of actions from revised Water, Water Action, State Wildlife Adaptation, Safeguarding California and Scoping Plans. These updated plans all recognise the value and imperative of linkage in their verbiage, but are thin in specifics. The Committee should call for a discrete commitment from the various agencies to report back to you in 6-9 months on the specific actions that will be taken together/to realise the synergies that are there in potential.

3) Leverage state-based expertise, include outside, independent expertise in the inter-agencies oversight panel: the revised draft Plan calls for inter-agency participation in various planning, but neglects a world class academic and innovator community in the state. These groups are essential for developing solutions outside the boxes and silos our agencies still fit in. The Committee should require that the Biocarbon Climate Plan specifically have outside expertise from academics and innovation on an interdisciplinary Oversight Panel.

4) Set Timely Investment Targets and Goals: The revised Plan defers goal setting for the Biocarbon sector to some future date. We know though, that investments in the forest sector, in particular, will bear the most fruit from early investments. This is also the low cost but high quality investment opportunity that yields more over time even as others get harder and more expensive. Forest based reductions are already known to be highly accountable and verifiable. The marginal cost of using forests to remove a ton of carbon from the atmosphere is less than reducing a ton of carbon emissions in many other sectors covered by the Scoping Plan. These relative marginal savings will become more pronounced as the state moves toward policies that aim to meet the 2050 goal of reducing emissions to 20% of 1990 levels. Moreover, multiple benefits from forest-- and other biocarbon-- investments increase as costs decline over time as forest

sequestration is scaled up. A clear example of this is strategic forest watershed conservation and restoration. Resilient carbon, water security, adaptation, and renewable energy benefits for communities all are more secure as an overall watershed is addressed.

Given the known costs and benefits of forest carbon sequestration, we urge the state to set near-term goals for forest sequestration by 2020 in addition to setting medium-term and long-term goals. The Committee should set a 5 year target of actions to set at least 10% our most critical forests on a strategic, clear and enduring trajectory of resilient, increasing sequestration.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on the draft update to the Scoping Plan.